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FOURTH SESSION.

The meeting was called to order at 8 p. m.

9. "A method of teaching metrics." By Mr. Edward P. Morton, of the University of Indiana.

One great difficulty in teaching metrics is that the pupils are too often ignorant of the simplest rules of scansion and almost always insensitive to the aesthetic effectiveness of different verse-forms. The first object of any teaching of metrics ought to be, therefore, to develop an intelligent appreciation of what the verse contributes to the general excellence of the whole.

In the absence of a text-book, which systematically points out the rhetorical reasons which underlie metrical effectiveness, I have pieced together a method which I wish briefly to describe.

The first, and perhaps the only principle of English verse which has not been questioned or rejected, is that accent, or stress, is at least predominant. The notation which most clearly recognizes this is one in which unaccented syllables are marked by an x, and accented syllables by a mark of accent. The strong point of this notation is that it attempts to mark only stress.

The most frequent, and apparently the most natural English foot is the iambus—the measure of at least nine-tenths of the bulk of our verse. Of this enormous quantity much more than half is in the five-foot measure, called the iambic pentameter. We may, therefore, safely assume this five-foot iambic line to be the standard English metre.

Because it is common, therefore, and because it is possible easily to compare its rhetoric with that of prose without having to account for the effects of rime, either upon the structure of the verse or upon the senses of the reader, I begin with blank verse. After half a dozen lessons in Tennyson's blank verse the students begin to see that the very monotony and lack of salient features make blank verse so infinitely adaptable. Of course, they will be very far from a real appreciation of the best blank verse, but they will be so accustomed to a measure marked chiefly by metre that they will be moderately sensitive to the effects produced by rime. So, when the class next takes up the heroic couplet, they see that rime emphasizes the line unit and tends to limit the expression of a thought to two lines.

The class next takes up the four-beat poems, *Il Penseroso*, *L'Allegro*, *Marmion*, *Christabel*, the *Ancient Mariner*, and Tennyson's *St. Agnes' Eve* and *Day Dream*. In these poems, in the order named, the approach to a rigid stanza form is closer and closer. In the *Palace of Art* and *Dream of Fair Women*, the stanza structure is perfectly definite and unvarying. After the four-beat measures, the class takes up the shorter ones, and then jumps abruptly from these to the very long six, seven, or eight-beat measures.

After a few lessons on the long lines, the class goes back to the five-foot measures and takes up the elaborate stanza structure of the ottava rima, the Spenserian stanza, and the sonnet. After the sonnet, the class again takes up blank verse, this time historically.

The course thus outlined is meant for a class that meets once a week throughout the year, but it can be cut down or expanded at need. I have had in mind one main purpose—to show my pupils as far as might be the effectiveness of different verse-forms. By taking blank verse first, the students are unable to apply any preconceived notions about poetry, and are obliged to fall back on rhetoric. The essential features of my plan are this, beginning with blank verse and the sharp contrast of different measures, I am not sure that it makes much difference whether we take first the short measures or the long ones, or whether or not we finish the study of verse lengths before we take up stanza structure.

By the end of the course students should not only see, but feel and understand that one definite problem of versification is always the effect of the verse on sentence structure, and of this latter in softening or enforcing metrical structure. In short, they should see that the versification of good poetry is not an arbitrary ornament, but an essential, organic part of the whole.

The paper was discussed by Professors A. E. Jack, L. A. Sherman, F. A. Blackburn, J. S. Nollen, C. A. Smith, Dr. F. I. Carpenter, and the author.

10. "Wilhelm Müller and Italian popular poetry." By Dr. Philip S. Allen, of the University of Chicago. [Printed in *Modern Language Notes*, XIV, 329 f.]

Remarks were made by Professors L. Fossler, W. H. Carruth, C. W. Wilson, F. A. Blackburn, and the author.

11. "The history of the Sigfridlegend." By Professor Julius Goebel, of Leland Stanford University.

It must be considered an established fact that the Sigfridlegend existed as a separate legend, independent of the story of the Burgundians with which it was afterwards combined. In my paper 'On the original form of the legend of Sigfrid' (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. XII, 461 ff.), I believe I have shown beyond doubt that we have the oldest and most authentic account of the original Sigfridlegend in the passage of *Beowulf*, v. 885 ff. According to this oldest account our legend consisted of the story of a hero who became famous by the killing of a dragon possessing great riches. It is of no importance whatever that our hero is called Sigmund in *Beowulf*. Sigmund, Sigurð, and Sigfrid are